

DE-RADICALIZATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME AS A STRATEGY FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism has remained a challenge to global peace and security especially in the 21st century where terrorists have acquired sophistication and global network of dangerous terrorist's organizations such as the al-Qaida, the ISIS, Al-shabbab, Janjaweed and the Nigeria's Boko haram. Boko haram insurgency in Nigeria has been a hydra headed monster that has overran communities, destroyed properties, rape and kidnap people and killed innocent citizens especially in the north east where the activities of the insurgents has been deadlier. The frontline states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno have suffered a great deal of unquantifiable socioeconomic destruction and distortion of social relations as a result of the lingering Boko haram crisis that have engulfed these states and spanned for close to a decade. Though, relentless efforts are being made to win the war in all fronts and its entirety, one of the approaches adopted by government is through De-radicalization programme of the Boko haram members who may have surrendered or captured in the war front. This paper examined the De-radicalization and Reintegration Programme (DRP) initiated by government in its effort to reintegrate the ex-Boko haram members in the north east. The paper relied and interrogated secondary sources of data. Similarly, the study used the theory of change as a theoretical framework. The study found that Furthermore, the study recommends that there is need to increase the number of rehabilitation camps to accommodate the increasing number of repentant Boko haram members, include skill acquisition as part of the training programme and increase the timeframe of the rehabilitation process.

Keywords: Boko haram, Insurgency, De-radicalization and Integration

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Terrorism being crime against humanity and property has posed a great havoc globally. The activities of this menace manifest themselves in different forms either by individuals or groups and are done covertly or overtly. The development of international terrorism should however be studied and understood in historical context.

Peter. (2015) opined that, being one of the terrorist groups Nigeria's "Boko haram" constitute a wider threat to the political, economic and security in Africa. Considering the fact that Nigeria is the most populous nation and the highest exporter of oil in Africa whose instability has significant global implications. Similarly, Aduloju, Opake and Adenipe (2014) opined that though there is much attention given to the spread of international jihadist movement especially the militant salafis group in West Africa, both locally and internationally, there yet to be coordinated regional counter-terrorism against the menace.

However, Akin (2015), observed that terrorist attack of the Boko Haram sect particularly in the northeastern Nigeria, have resulted in the killing of countless number of innocent people and wanton destruction of properties that worth billions of naira through bombings, and other forms of destructions. More worrisome however, is the fact that all the efforts of the Nigerian government to curtail the activities of the sect have not yielded the needed meaningful positive result.

In his effort to bring to an end of the menace of Boko haram, after his 2015 election victory, president Buhari reorganized the Nigerian military, providing them with improved weapons and funding, which successfully pushed the militants out of their bases and forced them on the run.

Furthermore, Major General Bamidele Shafa revealed that after defeat of the insurgents that federal government has made arrangement for the reintegration of all surrendered insurgents through "De-Radicalization" program at one of the camps Malamsidi in Gombe State. The general who is the coordinator of the program, declare that this is a "clarion call and a corridor of opportunity to remaining insurgents that are still in the bush to heed".

Similarly, Tilde (2015) a "civil rights activist" in his own opinion saw De- radicalization program in Malamsidi as an opportunity towards healing in North/Eastern Nigeria. He further says that the program will offer the insurgents another opportunity to turn a new leaf and contribute to national growth. Therefore, the program is geared towards healing the damaged cause by the activities of book haram, and at the same time the efforts put in by the federal government, ranging from the use of military during the fight against the insurgents, right up to

the level of the introduction of the program of rehabilitation and De-radicalization of ex-insurgents.

The activities of terrorism have caused underdevelopment, instability and backwardness in Nigeria particularly in the North/Eastern states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno which led to internally displaced persons IDPS. Government has been spending huge amount of money on feeding, health facilities, and accommodation to the displaced persons, and ex-insurgents whose population is in thousands. The affected victims of insurgency and the camped ex-insurgent members have different levels of psychological trauma and built up tensions, which in itself is dangerous to the peaceful coexistence of the society. This and other reasons led to the idea of introducing the program of De-radicalization and Re-integration of ex-insurgents.

Thus from the forgoing, it is important to note that in an attempt to curb the menace of terrorism beyond the use of force in Nigeria, noble objectives of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration which mainly focused on the Nigerian prison system embarks onto ensure that criminals become changed persons,

Furthermore, a review of some of the studies conducted on the issues of rehabilitation and reintegration in Nigeria emphasized the rehabilitation in prisons with mainly targeting prison inmates who committed various degrees of offences including some of the captured and arrested members of the radical terrorist groups, hence the need for De-radicalization program.

Atta and Shane (2016) stated in their paper that The Nigerian Counter Terrorism Strategy recognized that force alone was not enough to combat violent extremist elements in Nigeria. And that The Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) was tasked with developing an ambitious countering violent extremism (CVE) program consisting of three elements: community-based counter radicalization; strategic communications; and de-radicalization. The de-radicalization element of the CVE program included establishing a prison based de-radicalization program for sentenced and pre-trial prisoners.

It is therefore against this background that this study intends to study the de-radicalization program of ex-insurgents with particular emphasis on the challenges of de-radicalization program in Nigeria.

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DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

- i. **De-radicalization:** de-radicalization is a program aimed at detainees or prisoners suspected or convicted of terrorist crimes. However, for the purpose of this research, de-radicalization refers to the application of methods and techniques to undermine and reverse Radicalization process, rehabilitation and reintegration of particularly ex-Insurgents like boko haram members.
- ii. **Insurgency:** insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or quick seizure of power, which is characterized by asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain such as ; jungles, mountains and urban areas.
- iii. **Boko haram:** Boko haram is derived from a combination of hausa word “Boko” meaning Western education and Arabic word “Haram” meaning sin or literally forbidden. Book harm has therefore been commonly translated as Western education as sacrilege.

BOKO HARAM

‘Boko Haram’ literally means that “western education is forbidden” it is an Islamist militant insurgent group based in northeastern Nigeria that has been carrying out armed attacks on civilian populations. Though the sect evolved as a result of its strong proclivity against western education, it has grown to be a belligerent Islamic sect that has take-up arms against state establishments and defenseless citizen. The Arabic name of Boko Haram is *Jama’atuAhlisSunnaLidda’awatiWal-Jihad* (“People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad.”). The group became best known by its Hausa name ‘Boko Haram’. It was a local radical Salafist movement which morphed into a Salafi-jihadist terrorist organization after 2009. (Akinola, O. as cited in James A. F. 2016).

While the sect’s original leadership did not initially call for violence, its followers who were mainly recruited through the following: Ideological beliefs, Hypnotics, forceful conscription and through inducements, engaged in periodic skirmishes with Nigerian police during its formative years.

At that time the group’s activities were limited in scope and contained within several highly impoverished states in Nigeria’s predominately Muslim northeast. Lauren, (2016) observed that In July 2009, at least 700 people were killed during an effort by Nigerian security forces to suppress the group. In the course of that violence, the group’s leader, Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic young cleric who had studied in Saudi Arabia, was killed in police custody. The group subsequently appeared to dissipate, but reemerged a year later under new leadership,

orchestrating a large prison break in September 2010 that freed hundreds, including its own members.

According to Andrew (2012) Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes northern politics has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally, to create a “pure” Islamic state ruled by sharia law. Since 2009 it has been driven by a desire for vengeance against politicians, police, and Islamic authorities for their role in a brutal suppression of the group that year. But the group has proved itself to be very adaptable, evolving its tactics swiftly and changing its targets at the behest of a charismatic leadership. The group leapt onto the world’s agenda in August 2011, when it bombed the United Nations compound in Abuja, killing twenty-three people.

EFFECTS OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The continued bombings, killings, kidnappings and the destruction of property by Boko Haram have become of great concern to the Nigerian government and the international community. The activities of Boko Haram have devastating Socio-Economic Implications particularly in the North-East of Nigeria. Ovaga, (2012)The terrorizing effect of the activities of the fundamentalist sect, Boko Haram on the socio-economic condition of the northern states of Nigeria has become so devastating that some financial institutions and other business ventures have closed down in many areas, thereby causing relocation of non-indigenes to their own states.

He further opined that the dangerous dimension the insecurity challenge has posed by the fundamentalist group, Boko Haram, has heightened serious fears among Nigerian populace. The trend has led to incessant suicide bombings and all sorts of attacks in the northern parts of the country with little or no provocation. Consequently, lives and property are lost, business ventures and shops have remained closed especially in the north.

Olaide,(2013) in his paper stated that It has been established that insurgence of Boko Haram have posed serious challenges to this Nation which have been briefly highlighted in the following ways:

Economic, political, social, unity and diplomatic relations of the country in the same vein; According to Eme and Jide (2012). Since its terror campaign began, Boko Haram’s targets had been security formations and churches in several parts of the North. Now, they have also turned their radar on other institutions, the media and universities. From being an obscure movement confined to north-eastern Nigeria, the Boko Haram has emerged as the most palpable threat to

the polity's continued peace and development. Not only do the persistent attacks of the sect create widespread insecurity and fear, the prevalent dread of the militant sect has stifled normal processes of trade and investments as well as the performance of routine security functions.

The economic, social and psychological costs of the insurgency cannot be quantified. Commercial activities in the northeast have been reduced because of the unprecedented attacks by the sect. Banks, markets and shops do not open regularly due to the fear of the coordinated attacks from Boko Haram. According to Okereocha (cited in Oladayo 2014) human capital and investors drain is hampering economic development in the northeast this is due to the attacks on banks, markets, parks and government departments. The attacks on these commercial areas have led to the migration of people to other parts of the country.

Additionally Eme and Jide (2012) posit that Political, economic and social insecurity of a country encompasses all development goals and issues by being the root of the issue and the solution. Addressing issues of insecurity is crucial in order to execute successful development projects. As a goal, it is believed that every country should aspire to reach a point of security by protecting its citizens from structural violence, crime, and social insecurity. Indeed, without the safety of citizens, all plans for development, whether economic, political or social, will fail.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the theory of change for theoretical explanations of assessment "De-radicalization" program in post conflict situation in Nigeria. Theory of change to which the proponents are; Herbert Spencer (1857) and August Comte (1903), Opined that a theory of change is a purposeful model of how initiative such as a policy, a program, a strategy or a project contribute through a chain of early and intermediate outcome to the intended result.

To Peter (2013), Theory Of change is a set of beliefs about how change happens and, as such, it explains why and how certain actions will produce the desired changes in a given context, at a given time. He again posited that 'Interventions', particularly those that address issues of conflict, peace, justice and security, are often based on approaches and tactics that are rooted in implicit theories of change.

According to Anderson (2012). A theory of change can be a helpful tool for developing solutions to complex social problems. To him, a complete theory of change articulates assumptions about the process through which will occur.

DERADICALIZATION AND RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

In order to ensure the success of De-radicalization and Reintegration programs. UNDP Regional Project Document (2012) observed that Members of extremist group are disengaged from extremist groups and reintegrated into communities. Disengagement from violent extremist groups is a complex, delicate and multi-faceted process that requires careful planning and support, and is one of the first steps of an effective de-radicalization process.

According to Hogan and Braddock (2010). Any discussion surrounding the decision to release imprisoned terrorists back into society raises challenging questions: Where will they go? Who will monitor them? Will they re-offend? Can they be turned away from terrorism while in prison? Will any recidivism rate prove acceptable to the public? In addition to the security challenges raised by issues to do with changing terrorist behavior, resentment and feelings of injustice among victims of terrorism accompany even preliminary discussions about these issues.

“De-radicalization and Reintegration” are therefore programs, which are geared toward peacefully moving individuals and groups away from violent extremism, have grown both in popularity and in scope of late, even in just the past five years. While these programs vary widely, with differing subjects (e.g., prisoners, potential terrorists, convicted criminals, repentant extremists), aims (e.g., abandonment of extreme views, disengagement from terrorism, rehabilitation into society), sizes (from just a handful of participants to hundreds), and forms (from arranging jobs, marriages, and new lives for participants, to merely educating them on nonviolent alternatives to their methods), common themes and problems can be discerned. (Ellie. and Nur. 2010)

In recent years, however, a growing number of states have come to accept the view, implicitly or otherwise, that their respective national security interests may be served by exploring how to facilitate and manage the reintegration of convicted terrorists back into society. In particular, a perception has taken root that such efforts might be expressed through attempts to change terrorist behavior, primarily by “rehabilitating” or otherwise “de-radicalizing” those that have been detained as a result of their engagement in terrorist operations

DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAM IN NIGERIA

While the humanitarian crisis emerging with the influx of people fleeing into Europe requires immediate response, governments and civil society also focused on addressing issues of de-radicalization. Starting in early 2015 in Nigeria due to pressure mounted by the Nigerian Military on Boko Haram insurgents, many members of violent extremist group, began fleeing the group in an effort to return to their former lives. Therefore if provided with proper support, rehabilitation, and reintegration, defectors can play a crucial role in the fight against these radical insurgent groups. There by aiding in the effort to create more stable nations.

Nigeria's current counter-terrorism activities were born out of the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011 (as amended in 2013), which provided the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) with a mandate to: act as the coordinating body for all security and enforcement agencies under the Act; provide support to prevent and combat acts of terrorism in Nigeria; ensure the effective formulation and implementation of a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy for Nigeria; and build the related capacity of relevant security, intelligence, law enforcement and military services.(Barkindo, A. & Bryans, S. 2016).

The National Security Strategy set out that a military 'hard approach' alone could not adequately counter ideology-based terrorist insurgency in Nigeria. The strategy made clear that the Government also intended to adopt a 'soft approach' to counter-terrorism which would include a countering violent extremism program. This led to the introduction of De-radicalization programs across the country both in prisons and the established rehabilitation camps like that of malamsidi in Gombe State.

Buttressing the argument, Michael (2013) opined that Lessonsof de-radicalization and disengagement programs undertaken by Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Indonesia, among other countries, provide insights into the rehabilitation of individuals who are already under the influence of radical ideologies for members of radical groups who have been incarcerated, systematic rehabilitation programs are needed so that they can play constructive roles in society. He suggested that the government of Nigeria should emulate that which it can afford from the Saudi and Singaporean examples to reform radicalized fighters who have been incarcerated.

Similarly, Barkindo.& Bryans, (2016). Posited that, In implementing the Strategy, ONSA identified a number of objectives for De-radicalisationactivities: foster greater respect for human rights and rule of law; develop categorization of suspects and convicts leading to more effective documentation; train relevant staff on CVE, as prison staff need to be able to professionally

handle terror suspects and issues of rehabilitation; develop a range of expert psychologists and counsellors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts and train them in cognitive behavioral therapy and group therapy; utilize Islamic scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on aspects of dialogue and religious counselling; and offer vocational training for inmates, ensuring they have a basic level of education and acquire skills to assist their reintegration into society.

As Nigeria made a headway against Boko Haram, it faces a new challenge created by terrorists who voluntarily surrender their weapons. Therefore the question remains how can the country reintegrate the former fighters into society and ensure they won't become a future security threat?

The current solution involves a rehabilitation camp established by the Nigerian military to repatriate surrendered Boko Haram fighters and encourage others to abandon the insurgency. According to the Nigeria's Defense Ministry spokesman "RabeAbubakar Operation Safe Corridor will take the terrorists through various vocational training sessions to help them become productive citizens,. He urged other fighters still on the loose to surrender and benefit from the program. (Onize O. 2016)

In the same light, with the establishment of the rehabilitation camp in MalamSidi, Brig.-Gen. BamideleShaffa, Coordinator of Operation Safe Corridor for Repentant Boko Haram, stated that 800 repentant Boko Haram members would soon arrive Gombe for rehabilitation. Speaking during in an interactive session with newsmen, Shaffa said that all the necessary arrangements had been put in place to commence operation at the rehabilitation camp. He said the repentant militants would undergo a de-radicalization process in the camp, which would prepare them to go back to their various communities. (Punch 2016).

Explaining the efforts in place so far with regards the camp in malamsidi, the coordinator operation safe Corridor Maj. Gen. B.M. Shafa stated that the program includes the following: about 14 Federal Government agencies including the security personnel would work in the camp, the former militants would be trained in 12 different trades and vocations. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) would provide all the facilities for the training. And the provision of food and other items by National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) like bags of rice, vegetable oil, mattresses among other things. (Vanguard June 29, 2018)

RECOMMENDATION

The study came to the conclusion with the following recommendations;

- 1- There is need for extension in the time frame of the program from 3 to 6 months, in order to make the program more effective and address some of the issues relating to the inmates in particular of not understanding what the program is all about on arrival on the first month in the first month.
- 2- There is also need to an alternative means of reintegrating the inmates on graduation back to their various communities. This is one of the serious challenge concerning stigmatization on the part of the insurgents who may be rejected by their own people on going back.
- 3- For the program to continue and succeed, it requires the introduction of tool of assessment during the program right in the camp, so as to enable the officials in charge to review on the program and to give an insight on the way forward.
- 4- There is need for establishment of more camps of this nature in the remaining states of Northeastern Nigeria, so as to give a wide coverage in order to accommodate more inmates.
- 5- For effective running of the program, there is need for the federal government to inject more funds which one of the challenges faced particularly by the officials carrying out the program on the issue of their welfare.

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